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Link to Today

This Link to Today claims that, thanks to the Internet, we are currently living in the midst of another Renaissance.

Read with a Purpose

Read to see what makes your world as creative as Shakespeare's.

Build Background

Leon Battista Alberti, an accomplished thinker and artist of the Renaissance, first put forth the idea of the Renaissance man. Alberti wrote that "a man can do all things if he will," including achievements in the fields of art, science, and sports. The idea of the Renaissance man follows from humanism, a philosophy that places humans at the center of the universe and encourages the development of human knowledge and excellence.

Interior of a Printing Shop (1632)
Matthaeus Marien T. E. (1593–1650).

Another Renaissance?

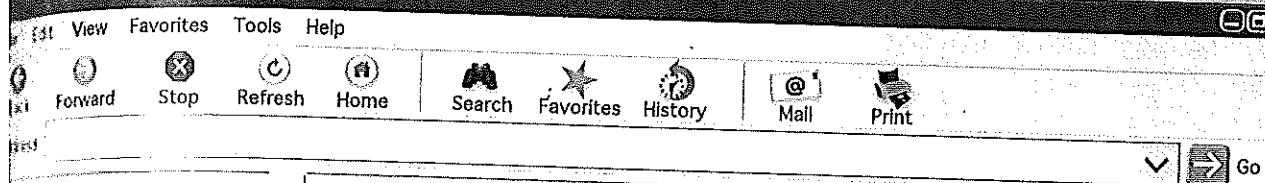
by Gary Fisher

Electronic Engineering Times

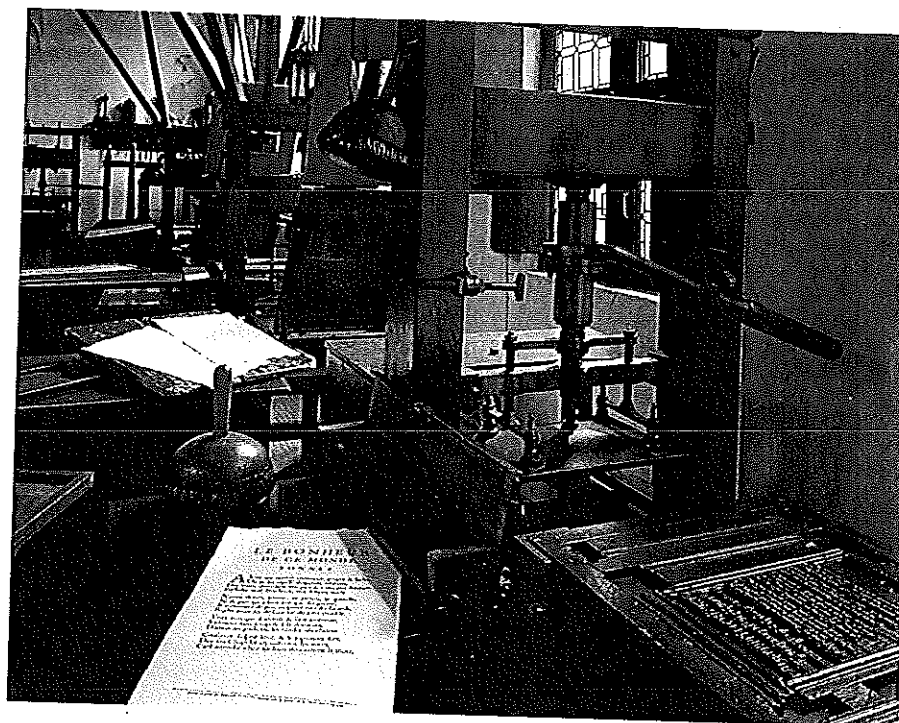
It must have been exciting to live during the Renaissance. This period, beginning in the fourteenth century, saw perhaps the most significant growth of literature, technology and the arts in history to that time. Particular advances, such as the development of printing and oil-based inks, permitted large numbers of individuals not only to see and to even own works produced by creative minds, but to produce and distribute their own work for others to see and judge.

And produce they did.





*The printing presses of the
printers Plantin-Moretus in
Antwerp.
Museum Plantin-Moretus,
Antwerp, Belgium.*



During the Renaissance, in brilliant contrast to an age in which literature and art required a wealthy patron to achieve any hope of a wide audience, it became possible for almost anyone who could learn the necessary skills and acquire access to the required technology to see their ideas—the results of their creative talents—spread to the four winds.

Much of the work, of course, was produced for personal satisfaction, and much for limited distribution among very specific audiences—societies, guilds¹ and members of other groups were sometimes united by little more than their published works. For all, the technologies of the Renaissance suddenly transformed the ability to read and write from the specialized domain of clerics² into a skill useful to anyone, and gave anyone “touched by the muse”³ an outlet for their creative works.

1. **guilds:** associations of artists or craftsmen, organized to maintain standards and to protect the interests of their members.
2. **clerics:** members of the clergy such as priests and monks.
3. **muse:** goddess who inspires a poet or artist. “Touched by the muse” means inspired by a creative force.



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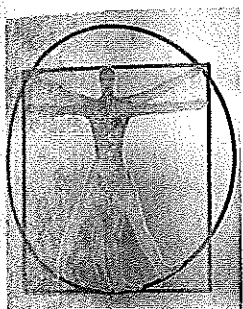
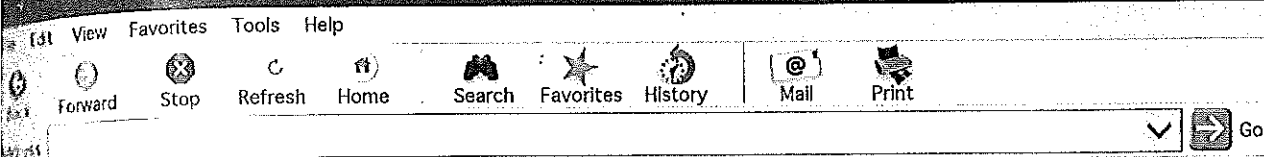
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Today

Perhaps the most significant effect of the Renaissance was the widespread access it opened to ideas. One of the most persistent concepts we still associate with the period is that of "Renaissance men," individuals who harnessed the technologies and creative energy of the time to put most of the current body of knowledge at their fingertips. These people wrote, but just as importantly they read and corresponded with others, building on that interaction and exchange of ideas to synthesize and develop their own.

We may be standing in the midst of another "Renaissance." Computers, the Internet and other forms of online communications, and a widespread spirit of creativity have come together during our time to give anyone with the desire to connect a worldwide audience for their talents, and millions are taking advantage of the opportunity. Many whose fifth-grade teachers might have considered them both illiterate and devoid of artistic talent are today busily learning to organize and publish the products of their creative energies in electronic form, daring to offer their ideas to a potential audience of millions.

"The Gathering," the world's largest
convention of computer enthusiasts.
Hamar, Norway.





The Proportions of the Human Body (1996), by Electros aka Babis Vekri.

The age of the **Renaissance person** may have returned; the sum of human thought and knowledge, from classical literature to the most recent discoveries of science, can be literally at the fingertips of anyone with the desire to master the skills and a little technology. The spirit of the Renaissance seems also to be returning; just as the "men of arts and letters"⁴ of that former era were willing—sometimes even eager—to correspond with those interested in their ideas, many of today's leading philosophers, writers and researchers participate in electronic discussion groups and gladly respond to thoughtful e-mail.

Who will be the next Da Vinci, the next Bacon, the next Jefferson?⁵ It's very possible they're online today.

4. **letters:** literature and other written forms of communication.
5. **Da Vinci:** Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), Italian artist and scientist;
Bacon: Francis Bacon (1561–1626), British statesman and philosopher;
Jefferson: Thomas Jefferson (1743–1846), American statesman and philosopher.
 Da Vinci, Bacon, and Jefferson are all considered Renaissance men.

Ask Yourself

1. **Read with a Purpose** According to Gary Fisher, what does our world today have in common with the Renaissance?
2. How did Renaissance technology affect reading and writing?
3. What specific features distinguished the Renaissance from prior ages?
4. Why might someone disagree with Fisher that "the sum of human thought and knowledge . . . can be literally at the fingertips of anyone with the desire to master the skills and a little technology"? Explain.